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Chapter V

THE MARRIAGE CYCLE

Marriage is a necessity to Kols and the ceremonies that accompany it are the most complicated of all their social rites. It is of the utmost importance that Kols be married and the bachelor or spinster life is altogether foreign to the Kol way of thinking.

Endogamy with Hypergamy. During the discussion of the Kol *kurhis* the principle of endogamy was established. It was shown, however, that along with endogamy hypergamy is occasionally practised, possibly due to Hindu and Rajput influences. Several instances of this were observed and one case may be mentioned in which there were two sons in a Rautiya family; one had married a Rautiya wife and the other a Thakuriya. Their respective children considered themselves full and equal Rautiyas. But Rautiyas never give their daughters to Thakuriyas. Hypergamy is probably a relic of the time when there was a good deal of mixing between men of higher castes and women of lower castes. In the case of the Kols this study indicates that hypergamy is practised only in connection with the *kurhi* that is considered immediately below it in the social ladder. This social ladder, however, is not absolutely fixed, though about Jubbulpore Rautiyas are generally considered the highest *kurhi*; yet it was sometimes stated that the Binj *kurhi* practise hypergamy with the Rautiyas and would take their daughters, but not give theirs to them. Russell and Hiralal, in discussing hypergamy in the Central Provinces say: "This custom prevails largely among the higher castes of the Panjab, as the Rajput and Khatris, and among the Brahmins of Bengal."[1] The stories in connection with the origin of the Thakuriyas may imply a form of hypergamy, except that the offspring do not rise to the level of the father.

Traces of Exogamy. While the principle of endogamy is strictly enforced and the thought of any other union is repugnant, there are nevertheless certain traces of an exogamous tendency which is not a *kurhi* or *goi* exogamy but rather village exogamy. It is not the rule for a Kol to arrange a marriage with someone in his own village. This is occasionally done, but as the last resort, after failing to find a mate in another village. Roy notes the same tendency toward village exogamy among the Kharias. He remarks: "The probable reason

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 28.

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a circle and all the time sang and beat time with their hands, the Chamar accompanying them with his drum. Several of the women took part in the digging of the earth and each girl was allowed but one blow with the pick. The earth thus displaced was gathered up with the mattock and put into the baskets. It was estimated that about thirty pounds were actually brought. The group then returned to the courtyard as slowly as they went but in the reverse order, with the lamp at the rear. The earth was then thrown in the centre of a small raised platform called the *mandil*, though occasionally the *mandil* is made later on from the earth brought in at this time. After the baskets were emptied the women brought water in small earthenware vessels and each threw water on the pile of earth until it was thoroughly soaked. The women then went to another part of the courtyard where each had left a bit of wheat which they brought from their homes when they first came. This was piled at another point and as each presented her wheat the mother dipped a bit of sweet oil from her household oil-jug and gave it to the other women. After this a small cone of cowdung, which is worshipped by unmarried girls, was set up on the *mandil*. See Figure 19.

This earth should be sufficient to make either five or seven *chulhas* and they should be prepared sometime during that night. In Deosori they said that it would be done in the morning, and as it is done only by the women of the household it is likely that it was done after the people had departed. The party broke up at this point and from twenty to twenty-five women and young girls departed. This happened at 9 P.M. Occasionally there is a feast following the *mangarmati*, but there was none in this particular case.

The next day the *chulhas* constructed from this earth should be ready for the preparation of the *lawa*, a mixture of parched paddy and millet, which is considered an indispensable part of the wedding preparations. During the time of its preparation there is joking and fooling. Before they can start to parch the rice one of the male members brings a young chicken and thrusts it into the lighted *chulha*. If the chicken does not catch fire and die (that is, if the *chulha* is not hot enough) it becomes the property of the male relative, but if it dies the women take it and make it into a curry. If the chicken catches fire no effort is made to save it. The parching of rice may now begin and this should be initiated by the man who brought the chicken. The same *chulha* which was used for the burning of the chicken should not be used for the subsequent parching. As the man commences his work some of his female relatives approach him and do all they can to disturb his work and irritate him. They may throw mud at him, abuse

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in the family, but the wife is in no sense his slave and plays a large part in its control and management. All affairs are brought before the family for discussion and decision before final action is taken. If one party is not agreeable to a certain proposition the other tries by coaxing or by some other means to win his or her consent. Nevertheless this picture, given by the men, may be over bright, for it appears from close observation that the rights of the wives are much less than those of the men. She is not as free as the men are and it is not the custom for her to go here or there without hindrance. The woman has a certain amount of what might be called "personal property" and is not debarred from possessing it, though this is limited to her ornaments, her clothes and anything that she may make or acquire for her personal use. When the husband dies his property goes to the sons, but as long as she is living she must be supported by the sons. If there is no son, the property remains with her as long as she lives, but passes to the husband's male relatives at her death.

The Kol widow is not subjected to the same disabilities as are found among certain classes of Hindus. She is not required to shave her head, nor discard her metal bangles and ornaments, nor wear a white *sari*. If young she may marry again, usually not less than a year after her husband's death, and if she is elderly she may go to live with her son or relatives. Widows are expected to make some contribution for their keep and are often found searching for fuel or roots and leaves.

PLACE OF THE WIFE. After marriage the chief duties of the wife are to care for the house, prepare the meals and be a mother to her children. In between it is generally expected that she will find some means to supplement the family income, either by directly engaging in remunerative work, or by gathering roots and tubers from the jungle, cow dung from the roads and paths, or wood for the kitchen fire. Dried cow dung cakes are most generally used for the fire. She does the washing of clothes for herself and her children. Men wash their own clothes.

During her monthly courses there is some interruption of her regular work. During that time she may prepare her own food, but is not permitted to prepare food for another. The man must do his own cooking, or make some other arrangements for the time being. There are other taboos at this time; she must never touch men's clothes nor should milk of any kind be touched by her. She may bring water from the well for her own use, but such water is taboo to any other member of the family.

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Occupation.	*How Divided.*
Care of small house garden.	Both men and women.
Moral training of children.	Do.
Punishment of naughty boy.	Both, but usually the father.
Punishment of naughty girl.	Both, but usually the mother.
Purchase of clothing :	
For children.	Both may do this.
For wives.	Men usually.
For men.	Men only.

From the above statement it would appear that the following general observations may be made :

1. There are certain occupations which are usually, if not always performed by the men of the family. Among these may be listed the following :

Ploughing.
Sowing seed.
Repairs to house and always of the roof.
Playing musical instruments.
Sacrificing before the deity.
Watching crops at night.
Threshing.
Purchasing clothes.
Washing own clothes.

2. Women are usually expected to :

Plaster floors and walls of the houses.
Grind the wheat for *chapatis*.
Cook the meals.
Clean the cattle shed.
Feed and care for the children.
Clean up the toilet of the children.
Gather cow dung for plastering and for use as fuel.
Wash plates and cooking vessels.
Wash children's and own clothes.
Make fire-places.
Sweep houses, courtyards and dispose of trash.
Dance.

3. A bachelor must perform certain of the duties in the home usually done by the women.